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SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE ENDS WITH  
ACCORD, POTENTIAL FUTURE ACTION

[¶1.](#) (U) Summary: The two-day Iraqi Inter-Religious Congress conference on the violence in Iraq brought together a geographically and ethnically diverse group of approximately 55 religious and tribal leaders and parliamentarians. Although the primary product of the conference was agreement on a religious accord calling for a reduction of violence, conference organizers highlight the vehicle for dialogue that the event created. During a side meeting, PM Maliki expressed to the delegation his strong support for the future work of the Congress. End Summary.

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The two-day conference  
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[¶2.](#) (U) The Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East (FRMME) and Canon Andrew White of the Anglican Church hosted the Iraqi Inter-Religious Congress (IIRC) on June 11-13 in Baghdad, the first of a series of conferences to address the problems facing Iraq from a religious perspective. The conference, which was funded by the Department of Defense, brought together religious leaders to discuss methods of reducing violence within Iraq and to create a 'vehicle for dialogue' for the future.

[¶3.](#) (U) The delegation fluctuated around 55 delegates and was comprised of Sunni, Shia, Christian, Kurdish, and Yezidi religious and tribal figures. The conference organizers noted that this was the broadest representation of religious leaders, both by sect and geography, held in Iraq in the last 37 years. A number of parliamentarians attended the first morning while the press was present; only two, Samia Aziz Mohamed (PUK) and Safia al Sohail (Iraqiyya) attended the entire event. Sheikh Fateh Kashkhif al Ghita, a Shia, moderated the discussions throughout.

[¶4.](#) (U) The delegates broke into groups to work on sections of the final conference accord and Canon White and a group of ten delegates chosen as representatives (five Sunni, four Shia, and a Christian), agreed upon the text of the accord and signed it. The full text of the accord is in paragraph [¶11](#).

[¶5.](#) (U) Throughout the conference, participants from all sides, including Sunni and Shia, made strong statements of support for the GoI and the Constitution, as well as for the establishment of rule of law throughout the country. Many of the religious leaders were also focused on combating corruption throughout the GoI, and expressed worries that this corruption was spreading to the general population. Though facilitators refocused the conversation on the reduction of violence, the theme of corruption appeared in much of the discussion throughout.

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Support from PM Maliki  
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¶7. (U) On the first day of the conference, a small group of delegates was invited to the Office of Prime Minister Maliki. According to Canon White, the PM welcomed the delegation and told them that Iraq needed more of these conferences. The PM also was "totally committed to this process" and "fully backed FRRME's efforts for the Iraqi people."

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Possible Follow-ups?  
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¶8. (U) In a May 31 meeting, Canon White had told the Ambassador that he hoped to create a council of religious leaders who would meet regularly to discuss these issues. He also had said that there was the possibility of a conference in Najaf, if it received Sistani's blessing. While the IIRC has planned some follow-up, they have yet to finalize significant details for future actions.

¶9. (U) The staff of FRRME indicated that they were reluctant to hold another conference in Baghdad, due to chronic problems with water and electricity availability at al-Rashid Hotel, where the conference occurred. The staff believes that a conference held in a city such as London or Cairo would have a much greater appeal and attract more delegates. However, they did not rule out the possibility of a meeting in Najaf, provided that it received the support of the Marja'ia.

¶10. (U) Canon White also briefly discussed a set of four working groups that would handle implementation of the accord. However, it was not clear who would serve on these working groups or what their goal was beyond simply broad implementation of the accord. The staff of the IIRC

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indicated that the members of each of these working groups were currently being decided. The IIRC planned for a group the focus on religion and culture, one to focus on international relations, one to focus on reconstruction, and one to focus on the preservation and restoration of holy places.

¶11. (U) The English translation of the accord provided by the IIRC can be found below:

BEGIN TEXT

In the name of God who is Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate,

We clerics, intellectuals and political leaders gathered at this congress pray and appeal for the peace of Iraq and declare our commitment to doing all in our power to ensure to end all acts of violence and bloodshed which are in violation of the right to life, freedom and dignity. "We have dignified man" (a verse from the Holy Quran). We as Iraqis from different traditions have decided to endeavor to live together as one family respecting the moral and religious integrity of every individual and we call upon all to condemn and renounce the culture of incitement, hatred and the demonization of the other.

According to our faith traditions killing human beings in the name of God is a desecration of the laws of heaven and defames religion not only in Iraq but in the world.

¶1. We seek to rebuild our country, the country of Iraq.

¶2. The acts of violence, terrorism, corruption, and all forms of oppression are contrary to the lofty principles of all our faiths.

¶3. The traditions of faith from antiquity have created and nurtured Iraq as the Land of Holy Places. The sanctity of

all our places of worship and religious sites must be protected and preserved by all. The freedom of religious worship must be guaranteed for all. "No coercion in religion" (a verse from the Holy Quran).

¶4. While we acknowledge and encourage the efforts of the government towards reconciliation, peace, and security we remind the government of its commitment to the mandate it has been given by the people. We call on the political leaders in Iraq to support the principles of the constitution as they work for a just, fair and peaceful democracy, according to the divinely inspired commandments of messengers and prophets.

¶5. We as religious clerics are against the criminal spread of arms in Iraqi society and ask for the removal of unauthorized weapons to create a safer civil society.

¶6. We call on and urge the international community to assist in the positive spiritual, political, and economic reconstruction of Iraq away violence and chaos and in line with the International Compact for Iraq.

¶7. We denounce Al Qaeda and other extremist groups and we commit ourselves to a new model of truth, openness and reconciliation which will enable the spiritual, political and physical restoration of Iraq.

¶8. We shall devote ourselves to continue our joint efforts for the unity of the people of Iraq and for the creation of a climate of togetherness in which our present and future generations may live with mutual trust and respect. We shall also educate our present and future generations to maintain this commitment while denouncing all forms of terrorism and extremism, political, religious, or otherwise.

¶9. We the clerics and intellectuals seek these goals of success, prosperity, fair governance, and religious freedom while denouncing the corruption and misuse of authority. We recognize these goals require us to preserve these efforts with the integrity of our mutual commitments through a continuing process of vested actions, committees, and meetings that produce the results of our message. We seek God Almighty's help in this regard and pledge to recruit likeminded leaders and remain unwavering in our desires to live in a free and sovereign Iraq.

¶10. We implore the Iraqi Government and the Parliament to speed up and activate the recommendations of all national, tribal, and religious reconciliation meetings in order to achieve balance and fairness according to the capabilities and expectations of the Iraqi people.

END TEXT.

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